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ABSTRACT

Written in 1965, the report provides the rationale for including the study of the mythology and art of cultures alien to Western civilization in the social studies curriculum: Man: A Course of Study. The context of the course, a basic theory of myth, principles of art, and examples of Bushmen and Eskimo myths are presented. The author suggests two reasons for the study of the Eskimo, Pygmy, Bushmen, and a group of Australian Aborigines: the societies are relatively simple and their structure is easier to understand than the complex Western societies; and the study of hunting societies offers a student contrast with his own culture. Included in the section on mythology is a definition, a discussion of myth as communication and as document, and of structural analysis, lyrics, ceremonials, folklore of hunters, riddles and proverbs, rites of passage, and the functions and interconnectedness of symbols. In the section on art, the author outlines differences between myth and art, the ecology of art, art and cognition, art in instruction, and the functions of art. Tales included in the final section are the Bushmen origin of marriage, of the sun, and of death, and the Eskimo tale, Earth Gives Men Their First Children and a poem, My Breath. The author concludes that the aim of the unit is to provide an understanding and respect of other cultures. (KC)

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## Occasional Paper No. 5

# *Myth and Art as Teaching Materials*

BY

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# *Introduction*

*In Occasional Paper No. 3, Dr. Jerome Bruner described the overall design of a course of study for the upper elementary grades, now being developed by the Social Studies Curriculum Program of Educational Services Incorporated. In pursuit of the study of man, he noted, five areas would be explored by the children. One of these areas — man's urge to explain, his ways of viewing the world -- and the teaching materials that are proposed for the study of this area are here described in greater detail by Dr. Elli Maranda, an anthropologist and folklorist who has been in charge of developing this particular unit. A few parts of this unit were used in an experimental summer workshop at the Underwood School in Newton, Massachusetts during the summer of 1965.*

*Dr. Maranda is now at the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

PETER WOLFF
*Editorial Director*

October, 1965

# *Myth and Art as Teaching Materials*

*by Elli Maranda*

There are some essential theoretical and practical considerations to be made in planning new materials for the classroom. The ESI social studies program is oriented towards (1) giving the students the best a given field has produced, and (2) letting them do as much as possible of the work of posing problems and finding solutions. We encourage independent work because it gives the student the most satisfaction, and also because it yields the best learning results. As curriculum planners, we believe that it is our task to define a theory which is both simple and solid, and to find materials which lead the student to become interested, to ask questions, and to give tentative answers. He is then to evaluate these tentative answers, or hypotheses: we should be able to train him to examine his answers critically and to find proof and counterproof.

Thus our courses are intended to develop both attitudes and skills. Some of these attitudes would be respect for primary sources, and interest in the materials themselves and in drawing conclusions on the basis of the materials. Important skills aimed at would be perusing a document in such a way as to know what can and what cannot be concluded from it. Such attitudes and skills are usually attributed to scholars; it is not, however, our aim to train little precocious social scientists, but to help the growth of the mind — intellect, imagination, and emotional and social maturity.

Before entering on a general exposition of the theoretical and practical considerations which have concerned me in my work for laying the ground for a teaching unit on symbol systems (more specifically on what could be called *Weltanschauung*), let me report an experience which I had recently in talking with a 12-year-old schoolboy, David. I was interested in finding out what a student of his age would do when confronted with entirely new materials. I chose some descriptions of the earliest white encounters with American Indians.

David had some ESI training in reading a document: he had participated in the Caesar class of summer 1964.[1] His studying skills were such as we would hope the Caesar course gives: he checked where and when a document was written, whether by an eyewitness or from hearsay, and for what purpose. At one point, I asked him to organize the bunch of materials he had so far compiled, in any way he thought made sense. His organization was based on his estimation of the reliability of sources. Diaries, he thought, would be more reliable than letters written back to Europe, since a person making notes for his own use would not be trying to influence another person, whereas a letter-writer would have the receiver in mind. Furthermore, David observed, the least reliable source would be a text written to be published in a book and intended to conform to the prejudices of many. As far as direct recording of native texts was concerned, he wanted to know whether the person who wrote down a text was familiar with the language or had an interpreter. Such statements as Columbus's maintaining that the Indians "appear to have no creed" made David suspicious, since the rest of the text showed that Columbus would not have appreciated a non-Christian faith anyway, and that he did not attempt to learn the language of the people he met, but was making plans to teach them his language and to convert them to his own religion.

Whether one agrees with these particular criteria or not, David showed skills in the critical reading of a document which are not usually expected from a boy his age.

Even more significantly, David quickly became interested in trying to establish by himself whether the Indians had any creed and what its content and functions were. Upon his request, I gave him some recordings of American Indian oratory, prayers, tales, and songs. He pointed out, in many cases with admirable insight, that these people wanted to find an order in the universe, that although the "actions" and the "things they asked for" differed from those of Christians, the functions of religion were very much the same. He found that attitudes of reverence and conceptions of sacredness were found among these pagans; that theirs was a "great religion," as he put it.

The net result of these talks with David was, for me, the conviction that given genuine materials it is easy for a child to appreciate and to respect an alien culture in its own terms. A grown person knows his own culture better, but also tends to be

[1] Cf. Occasional Papers Nos. 1 and 2.

more in agreement with it than a child. In other words, an adult is likely not to be as open-minded as a child is. His wall of prejudice is thicker, for it has been developing for a longer time.

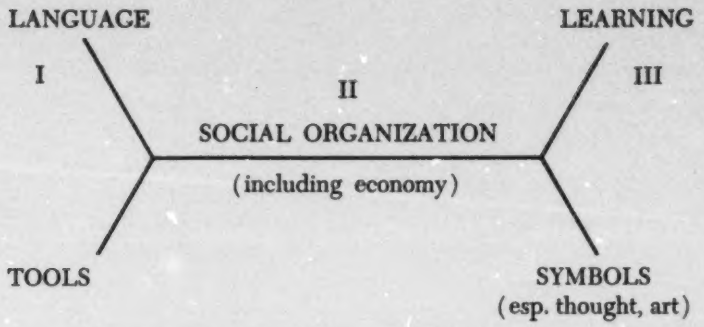
## THE CONTEXT OF THE COURSE

The present course[2] concentrates on the problem of being and becoming human. The decisive factor in the making of man is culture, that is, learned behavior (Cf. Oliver 1964: 51-54). In more detailed terms, this means that man is distinguished by his superior capacity for acquiring skills, attitudes, and possessions, for holding them, and for transmitting them. A child is born without culture. The process of learning makes a child a man — a member of society who participates in the workings of the group. This process can be called socialization or enculturation. It is, indeed, biologically determined; at the same time, it is culturally conditioned — in other words, in every society children must be brought up, but there are many ways of doing it, and different societies have developed different systems of educating their offspring.

Moreover, not only does man have a long period of time almost entirely devoted to growing and learning, but he also retains some of the mental flexibility of the young until the end of his life and can learn new things even in his old age. Here he radically differs from other animals, of which the saying holds true that "you cannot teach an old dog new tricks."

In our course we will emphasize the phenomenon of learning. We include, naturally, more than that: the results of learning. These are many and varied. We have chosen to emphasize a few, keeping in mind that despite the selective emphasis we will include other aspects under the chosen headings. Our course consists of units on social anthropology, education, linguistics, technology, and, last but not least, cosmology. Before discussing the last, the central topic of this paper, let me sketch the background by drawing a simple model to show the interplay of these five aspects of culture.

[2]Cf. Occasional Paper No. 3.




Each one of the aspects can be considered a system, that is, there is a definite — even if complicated — order in it. The fact that this is so has been best documented for language and social organization, respectively. Numerous social anthropologists and linguists have convinced us of the fact that there is method in the apparent chaos of raw data. For the other aspects, we are at least entitled to the opinion that they are systems; this opinion is supported by such eminent scholars as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962, 1964), Bronislaw Malinowski (1925), etc. As a working hypothesis the concept of system is useful, as will be shown below.

I would like to stress two things about these systems: that they are relatively independent of one another, but that together these systems form a system, namely a culture which operates in the framework of a society. The first point can be restated thus: each of these systems is *complete in itself*, and is *sui generis*, of its own order. Although all the systems are man's answers to his basic problems — how to cope with his environment, with his fellow men, and with himself — they are not automatically derivable from their functions or one from the other. The aspects do, however, influence each other, perhaps primarily in the order I→II→III (cf. model above).

Let us illustrate how technology influences social organization. An important factor leading to the division of labor was the storage pit: when men could store their food, their hands were freed for activities other than the picking of food. Some men could cease that activity altogether, if they could render other services and were paid with food (cf. Childe 1936).

We tend to look at our society as profoundly different from "primitive" societies (in more modern terminology, "simple" societies). There is a difference from which perhaps all other dif-

ferences derive: the level of technology. The first of the technological "jumps" or revolutions came about with the invention of writing: it freed man's memory from the burden of keeping all knowledge available all the time (just as the storage invention had freed his hands from keeping food coming all the time). While writing reduced the effectiveness of memory, it expanded the range of possible ideas.

The advent of printing enabled man to multiply the storage places of ideas, until we arrive at the present situation where the main problem is not the lack but the wealth of ideas, with the consequent difficulty in locating them.

To have an example of the interconnections of language and social organization, we need only to think of the fact that the very concept of "father" is a symbolic phenomenon,[3] not to speak of the point that such concepts as that of mother's brother, mother-in-law, or any relatives of the second degree rest entirely on the symbolic use of words. As one writer puts it, "We are so accustomed to animal fables like that of Donald Duck and his nephews . . . that we come to take our human nature too much for granted . . . the alarming and significant fact is that *ducks do not have uncles!*" (La Barre 1954:45)

Social organization, in turn, exercises a marked influence on education. It is self-evident that if a society has a structure (and it does), a child is brought up to participate in the system and to appreciate the system itself. In all societies, children's games imitate adult behavior, at least to some extent, and toys are miniatures of adult tools. Since culture is learned and not innate behavior, each individual has to start from scratch to learn the behavior of his group. But the scope of learned behavior may be wider than we are normally willing to grant: such "fundamentals" as feminine and masculine traits are greatly determined by one's upbringing — don't we cherish such rhymes as "What are little girls made of?/Sugar and spice and everything nice/That's what little girls are made of./What are little boys made of?/Frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails/That's what little boys are made of." (The point about masculine and feminine roles being culturally conditioned is made particularly clear by Mead in *Sex and Temperament*, a classical volume, even if almost too neat; see Mead 1935.)

[3] In fact, there is evidence for the argument that even a child's kinship with his mother is a "symbolic" phenomenon, that is, that there are societies which do *not* recognize their consanguinity. The situation is extreme, but it exists. For a fascinating discussion of the point, see Leach 1961: 8-27.

As a matter of fact, not only the content but also the method of education is a part of social organization. Who instructs the children? In our society, the responsibility rests largely on the shoulders of teachers. Moreover, we have two parallel institutions for education, the home and the school. This explains why quarrels arise as to whose fault a bad upbringing is: the parents can blame the school, the teachers can blame the home.

Within the family, the instructor's role can be given to the mother (a common case), the father, the mother's brother, the grandmother, elder siblings, etc. Much has also been written on the influence of the kind of treatment given to the child from the very beginning of his life: authoritarian or egalitarian, tender or neglecting, easygoing or stern. There are many methods of bending the twig, and consequently there are many directions in which the trees grow.

Let these illustrations suffice to point out that there may be an order in which cultural aspects influence each other (language and technology act on social organization which in turn acts on education and symbol systems). There are also countercurrents. For example, there is a phenomenon sometimes called cultural inertia: things do not move, adaptation does not occur as rapidly as changes in the environment which require adaptation. Often this is so because of the resistance given by two strongholds of tradition: education and symbol systems. There are always traits in a culture which have become meaningless, but are preserved "for their own sake," or, really, for the sake of habit. The first cars were shaped after the model of horse carriages.

By investigating the workings of these five aspects of culture, the student should reach understanding of culture as a whole. But here we have to distinguish between an abstract phenomenon — that called culture — and its particular manifestations — those called cultures. Any detail, such as so-called cultural traits, can only be studied in its context before it can be meaningful in education. As Gregory Bateson (1936:1) observed, "If it were possible adequately to present the whole of a culture, stressing every aspect exactly as it is stressed in the culture itself, no single detail would appear bizarre or strange or arbitrary to the reader, but rather the details would all appear natural and reasonable as they do to the natives who have lived all their lives within the culture." This is why we cannot single out loose details, but we have to take the "outline," that is, the structure of the whole, and show what are the interrelations of the parts. The entity the stu-

dents can study is *a* culture, the life of a particular group of people who live together in interaction; in other words, the life of a society.

I maintain that it is safe to equate the entire life of a society with its culture: for even "natural" facts are reacted to in a "cultural" fashion. Such natural phenomena as birth, growing, sickness, and death are handled in a way which the society determines.

## WHY SHOULD WE STUDY ALIEN CULTURES?

As soon as it is agreed that in order to understand a culture we have to study the whole, it becomes obvious that the task is immense. A complex society, such as the United States, would be impossible to cover in any course, even if spread over years: there are too many subsocieties, such as ethnic, regional, professional, economic, and religious groups, each with its particular cultural heritage. It becomes imperative that the task be restricted in some manner. One way of doing it is to reduce the number of variables, in order to reveal the structure of the whole. It is for this reason, and for this reason only, that we choose societies whose technology is relatively simple, such as hunting and gathering societies.

Thus, our selection of certain hunting societies — an Eskimo society, Pygmies, Bushmen, and a group of Australian Aborigines — is done partly on the basis of practical considerations. These peoples each live in a clearly defined, characteristic kind of environment, and they have developed characteristic answers to its challenges. Their technologies are simple, but they are sufficient: each of the groups has been able to maintain its life — and its traditional way of life — for a long period of time. We will not teach that they are primitive in any derogatory sense of the term. In fact, the use of "primitive" as a value-judgment term is old-fashioned and has been abandoned by respectable anthropologists (cf. Hsu 1964). Anthropologists have shown growing concern since the first decades of this century for the fact that all men are created equal. And this saying is here not meant to refer to men's *rights*, but to their *capabilities*. As A. L. Kroeber put it, "All men are totally civilized" (1915). More recently, and per-

haps more pointedly, Claude Lévi-Strauss has discussed the alleged differences between "the so-called primitive mind and scientific thought" showing that the thought *processes* are the same and that the differences lie in the materials available to the thinker (1958:230. See also Boas 1927:356).

In a sense, we can even maintain that all cultures are created equal. What this means is that all societies, given sufficient time, make sensible choices and adjust to their environment so that theirs is the best of all worlds possible for them. Structurally, a simple culture is as complete as ours: there is a balance between the functions and the "elements" of culture.

One more, in a sense theoretical, argument for the study of hunting societies: they are necessarily alien from our own society, Western societies being the most complex that exist and hunting societies being the simplest known today. Therefore, the study of hunting societies offers the student a contrast with his own culture, and such a contrast is, in the experience of anthropologists, beneficial for the analysis: you can appreciate a phenomenon better if you are not emotionally involved in it (as you are in your own culture). The perspective given by the distance should be of a great value for the student. This is a view directly opposite to the wide-spread trend of teaching social studies "from the familiar to the unknown" (exemplified, e.g., in Merritt 1961). In many schools, the students are studying their own environment starting with immediate circles which grow with very much the same ratio that the children's own grasp of the world grows. It seems to me that the students are then being taught what they would learn and do anyway.

## A BASIC THEORY OF MYTH

In the following, I can give only a sketchy outline of the theory of mythology. I cannot here illustrate this theory with detailed examples, but I hope this outline will help the reader see the principal ideas underlying the work on symbol systems.

*DEFINITION OF MYTH.* A myth can be defined as a narrative which concerns itself with the problem of how the world came into being and took its present shape; how people

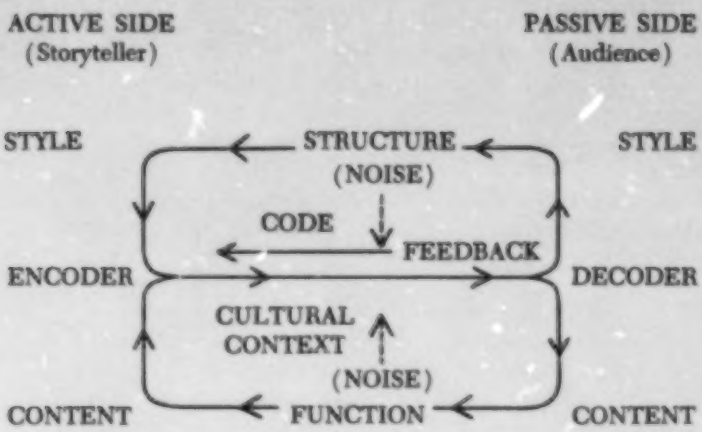
originated, how they organized their mutual relations and their relations with their environment.

We can safely say that the core of the beliefs of any given group is expressed in their mythology. It is also true that tales of origin do not only deal with how things came into being, but also with why things continue being as they are. That is, the function of mythology is not only intellectual but, in an even more important way, moral and emotional. As Malinowski expressed it:

> "Myth as it exists in a savage community, that is, in its living primitive form, is not merely a story told but a reality lived. It is not of the nature of fiction, such as we read in a novel, but it is a living reality, believed to have once happened in primeval times, and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies. This myth is to the savage what, to a fully believing Christian, is the Biblical story of Creation, of the Fall, of the Redemption by Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross. As our sacred story lives in our ritual, in our morality, as it governs our faith and controls our conduct, even so does his myth for the savage." (1932: 72)

Like our own society, all societies in the world have systems of thought. For ourselves, we label our systems philosophy, or esthetics, or medicine, or law, or, for that matter, education. Our systems have grown so complex that no one of us can master them all. However, we should not forget that in a simpler society an integration between these diverse fields is a reality.

*MYTH AS COMMUNICATION.* It is because of the life-supporting function of mythology that it is fitting to approach myth as *communication.* A myth is a living reality, and reality is constantly present. Myth lives in its retellings, in the interaction of the raconteur and his audience. It is essentially a *message* which is constantly *encoded* and *decoded.* The *audience* knows it, passively, as well as the *encoder* knows it actively. It is because of this passive (but conscious) mastering of the *content* and *style,* and because of the unconscious (but no less real) sharing of the *function* and *structure* that the storyteller is made to adhere to an unchanged form. A diagram representing this communication could be drawn as follows:




Function and structure are the aspects which are unconscious to both the encoder and the decoder, whereas they are both aware of sharing the code (usually the language, but in some genres, also music or movement) and the cultural context. Style is the aspect which is "personal property" of the encoder and normally determines whether he is considered good or not (aspects of style which are not personal belong to the code in general but it could be maintained that a good *mastering* of any stylistic feature is always personal property). The content is the repertoire of themes mastered by the encoder (and correspondingly, it can be maintained, there is the passive repertoire of the decoder, the items which he recognizes). Furthermore, there is a "stylistic repertoire" which the encoder masters actively, the decoder at least passively. To sum up, the upper half of the diagram reads thus: the active stylistic repertoire of the encoder, the code shared by both the encoder and the decoder, and the passive stylistic repertoire of the decoder; the lower half reads thus: the active content repertoire of the encoder, the psychosocial context which the encoder and the decoder share, and the passive repertoire of content of the decoder.

The reading of the static diagram as a dynamic model which describes the process of communication is the following: out of his repertoire of structures and functions and of stylistic and content devices, the encoder builds a message which he sends towards the decoder. On the way there are possible sources of

noise, namely differences in the code and differences in the cultural context. If the noise does not distort the item (the message), it reaches its destination, the decoder, and is consciously appreciated with regard to both the style and the content, and subconsciously with regard to the structure and the function.

This model is essentially symmetrical. The active side represents those who know and tell the narratives; the passive side represents those who know, listen to, and appreciate them. Without a common repertoire of structures, functions, content elements, and stylistic devices, *noise* will interfere, and the narrative either changes or dies (E. Maranda 1963:97-106).

A person who is not a member of the society will have to obtain a knowledge of these aspects. The task is the same for the anthropologist and for the grammar-school student: they have to acquire an understanding of the cultural context in order to have an insight into the meaning of myth. One of the sources of noise will, in our course, be eliminated: the differences in language. The myths will be presented to the children in English. We want, however, to preserve the feelings of a genuine style. This is why we ideally make no changes in the text, but preserve them as close to the original manner of speaking as possible. As far as new concepts, such as references to unknown technology, strange animals, and culturally conditioned ideas are concerned, we try rather to render them clear than to omit them.

To sum up: the myths that are given to the children to read should be as genuine, as well collected, translated and documented, as possible. On the other hand, they should be as representative of the original way of thinking as possible. The insistence on scholarly materials does not, however, exclude an enjoyment of the narratives; I believe the contrary to be true. From some experience with myths in the classroom, I would venture to say that *the better a myth meets the basic requirements of scholarship, the better the children will be able to gain understanding of the culture, and from such understanding they will receive intellectual and esthetic enjoyment.*

It can be said that man can only make myths in his image. As some examples below will show, a society is reflected very clearly in its myths. The relations between men and women, their division of labor, principles of cooperation, family structure and other social relations, are part and parcel of myth. But not only that, the ecology of the group appears often very clearly in its narratives. Features of natural environment such as the climate, the

landscape, the plants, and the animals that man is surrounded by, are referred to, and so are man's responses to the environment. It is possible to put side by side a Bushman tale and an Eskimo story, and it will be plain from the first reading which is which. Men who live surrounded by snow talk about snow, and men who live in a desert place their narratives in the desert. Bushman stories will tell about men in the heat of day and in the cold of night; Eskimo references are to ice, snow, frost, and wind. The Bushmen tell about thirst, the Eskimos about hunger.

*STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS.* At this point we must say a few words about the concept of narrative structure. A retelling of a narrative can be called an *item*. For our purposes, this is a suitable basic unit for the analysis of structure. The whole structure of the item can be called a *plot*. A plot usually opens with an *initial situation* which consists of a statement of the *actors* and a *problem* that these actors face either between themselves or together. The actors are often given in terms of their mutual social relations. In European narratives these relations very often are limited to the nuclear family: the actors are, for example, a married couple and their children, or a set of three brothers, or three sisters, or children and their stepmother. The *action* (or *mediation*) is aimed at removing the problem, and the removal of a problem and its consequences constitute the *outcome*. The outcome of a successful mediation is therefore in direct opposition with the initial situation. Aristotle observed this, when he defined a plot as the series of stages by which a person passes "from misfortune to happiness or from happiness to misfortune." In the case of a positive outcome, a permanent gain may be added; in the case of a negative outcome, a permanent loss.

There are different kinds of plots, although that above is most typical of myths. We may also be told about unsuccessful attempts at removing the problem. Furthermore, there is a class of plots in which a problem is stated, but no attempt is made to remove it. Such structures are typical of poetry (Köngäs and Maranda 1962).

On this most abstract level there are very few types of structure. If, however, we analyze a plot further, we will find important cultural differences. The agent that removes the problem may be the youngest, the poorest, or otherwise the least significant person in one culture, but the mediation may be attributed to supernaturals in another culture.

An analysis up to this point would, in a way, correspond to the analysis of a sentence in which the gross constituent units of the sentence (subject, verb, etc.) are distinguished. The structural analysis of a plot can go much beyond this. Each constituent part of the plot can be further analyzed into individual actor-action phrases, which will be the smallest units found in narrative structure (cf. P. Maranda 1964). It is then possible to determine what kind of actors are most frequently performing each kind of action. By frequency analysis it is also possible to establish objectively who is the protagonist (main character) of the plot. (This criterion was developed by P. Maranda, in 1964.)

This kind of analysis can be compared with phrase structure grammar. Comparisons of different plots will reveal principles which are similar to those operating in a transformational grammar (cf. Chomsky 1958). To give an example, a narrative that has identical actors in its different variants may show different outcomes in societies that have different social structure. If in tribe A the social structure is markedly based on the opposition between moieties, we may find narratives in which two main actors are in sharp opposition, for example, one constantly tricking the other. But if in tribe B such an opposition is only mild, the trickster stories tend to lose the contrast, and these two main actors may even cooperate. In such a case the social structure is the factor which influences transformations of plots.

*MYTH AS DOCUMENT.* Were we to give the students exercises involving structural analysis, we would undoubtedly train them in a careful reading of a document. It is worth noting that a genuine myth, or song, or description of a magic action, is a document very much in the same way that early writings are historical documents. An intelligent reading of a representative story will teach a child as much about the society that he is studying as an intelligent reading of a letter written 300 years ago does about life in his own society at that time.

*LYRICS.* I mentioned above genres like lyrics. Whereas a myth tends to emphasize the cohesion of the society as a whole, a lyric is often attributed to an individual singer and tells about his problems, his experiences, his attitudes towards his fellow men, and his worries. Yet there is a common denominator to poetry; it points out what is central rather than what is peri-

pheral, just as myth does (cf. Durkheim 1911:43; Elkin 1938:198-199). Thus if we take up in the classroom a song sung by an old Eskimo hunter who now feels that he cannot adequately fulfill his roles in society, his duties as the supporter for his family, we have given the children a clear illustration of what it means to be a member of a group which lives in a harsh environment, which is small in number, which has no institutionalized social welfare, and in which every adult person is almost indispensable.

*CEREMONIALS.* If we give the children a description of how an Eskimo shaman purifies a sick person (Rasmussen 1929: 123-129), we will lead them to see how important group solidarity is in that particular environment, how people are trained to help each other, to participate in each other's problems, and again how much each individual is valued. The student will also be able to see that a disease calls for an explanation, and that an explanation, even if it is not adequate, gives assurance.

*THE FOLKLORE OF THE HUNTERS: ANIMAL TALES AND MAGIC.* If the students study animal tales told by hunting people, they will see how important the animals are in the life of a hunting society, how concerned people are about the behavior of animals and how they over-respect them. In descriptions of hunting techniques and in magic formulas used to increase the chances, the fact will become obvious that technology and skill do not guarantee the success of one's endeavors. Hunting is more successful if the hunter is skilled, but even the most skillful man has to face the problem of luck. It might be said that magic is based on the assumption that there is someone playing against man, namely the supernatural. Magic actions and words are calculated to increase man's skills or to convince his opponent to yield his skills to man's service. The supernatural world is very often, perhaps always, built in the image of man's society. It is ruled by leaders similar to the rulers of man's world. If man has domestic animals, wild animals are thought to be owned by the inhabitants of the supernatural world. As man has command over his territory, so have the supernaturals control over theirs, and man cannot trespass in the latter's territory.

*RIDDLES AND PROVERBS.* Such genres as riddles and proverbs are often too language-bound to be easily converted

to classroom materials. It is, however, true that they also often reflect central values and often codify law. Where possible, we will utilize such materials.

*RITES OF PASSAGE.* It goes without saying that ceremonial and myth are extremely closely connected. I have already hinted at curing ceremonies. The annual cycle of a tribe which lives in an area of clear demarcation of seasons follows the seasonal change. Human life cycle gives impetus to ceremonials at all important points of transition. Even we observe what are called rites of passage when a child is born, when a person graduates, when he gets married, and when he dies. Rites of passage (Van Gennep 1908) mark the transition from one status to another. In the life of a simple society, this usually involves the birth of a child, perhaps name-giving, his maturation, his becoming married, his becoming parent, his transition to the group of elders, and his death. While a member of one status group, the person is well defined, he "belongs." When he is undergoing transition from one group to another, he is not defined: he no longer belongs to the group that he is leaving, and he does not yet belong to the group into which he is graduating. At this point he is outside the society, as it were, and is considered to be in danger, for society is identical with safety, and the world outside is identical with danger. To help, to protect the person, the members of the society institute ceremonials both to emphasize the advance of the individual and to protect him in this dangerous period.

*THE FUNCTIONS OF SYMBOLS.* What can the student learn through the study of these materials? First of all, he should obtain a feeling — whether he will express it in words or not — that any society makes sense. However different the ways of a society are from ours, the basic principles are the same. Intellectual considerations such as searching for explanations and relying on explanations taught by more experienced people, esthetic considerations such as using language in a pleasing fashion, moral considerations such as maintaining order in communal life, are all characteristic of the most complex and the most simple human groups.

*SOME PRELIMINARY RESULTS.* It is interesting to observe that the first reactions of students who read some of our

Bushman myths were those of great surprise at discovering that these people wanted to explain their world. The same students were able to observe that those features which are important in Bushman life, such as the physical environment and the animals, were made central in the stories.

Here are some of the actual statements made by students after reading a Bushman story of how the lion became the king of animals and a myth about the origin of death. The children said:

These stories tell why and how things came to be like they are.

These people are able to give opinions.

They want to know about everything, why do people die why does the rain fall.

They want to explain things.

These people must travel because the places are different in the stories. They must live where the lion is important.

(Referring to the fact that the moon's message as it reached the people determined their mortality): It shows that the moon is one of their gods because whatever the moon said they would automatically believe.

They believe in a lot of gods.

Why do they have animals behaving like humans, talking? It could be just a fairy tale, but the chances are it was a legend which they really believed.

This is easily understood because it tells about the animals (as opposed to using different human types in contrast to each other).

*THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF SYMBOLS.* In order that the children might gain an insight into how beliefs and symbols form a system in a given culture, we will need a set of stories rather than one or two single items. Furthermore, such a system is to be found in the entire corpus of people's stylized verbal expressions — in tales, poetry, beliefs — rather than merely in its myths, which only are a part of the whole. Moreover, non-verbal expressions are intimately linked with verbal items, and may symbolize the same ideas. In other words, the same — or a

related — message can be sent using different *codes*, of which language is one, movement (dance or other formalized action) another one; music one, or the arrangement of color and line still another; and the codes may also be combined. Thus a dance or a picture may "tell the same story" as a myth does. For the ethnographic areas used so far in our course — that is, the Eskimo and the Bushman — these interrelations are not as well documented as they are for Australian Aborigines, from whom about one thousand bark paintings have been collected and in part documented regarding the relations of myth and art (Mountford 1961 and 1964:21).

## SOME PRINCIPLES OF ART

*MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MYTH AND ART.* Art operates in space, whereas myth operates in time. Both of them have organization. An organization in space does not, however, yield itself as easily to the representation of events as does an organization in time. Principally, then, myth tells about actions which follow each other and which bring forth changes in the initial situation, whereas art is more suitable for depicting actors or, more generally, pointing out topics. (It is only with such pictorial forms as cartoons and films that pictures can tell a story.) We will learn much about people's perception of their environment, if we study their painted or carved images, but for an interpretation of what these perceptions mean in the people's life we need verbal statements. It is because of the difference of the media (codes) that the children should have both art and myth in the classroom materials.

*THE ECOLOGY OF ART.* Art will also show how ingeniously the possibilities of a simple environment can be utilized. Take an Australian group. For most of the year, these people do not have a shelter. It is only for the rainy season that they construct lean-tos. But during this season their movements are restricted. They are confined to an area of a few square feet. It is at this season that the art flourishes in its original form. The inside walls of the lean-to are painted full of pictures (Berndt 1964:3).

There are only a few colors available: black, red, yellow and white, those materials at hand in the immediate environment. It is proof for the strictness of the social organization that the ownership of these few colors is counted along moiety lines: two of them are owned by one group, the other two by the other. One can have the use of all four colors only after an exchange with the members of the opposite moiety (Mountford 1964:22).

From natural fibers and stiff animal hair these people make brushes. The background — the canvas as it were — is the bark walls of the lean-to. We see that the materials utilized are reduced to a minimum.

*ART AND COGNITION.* However, the art produced using these materials is extremely sophisticated. One characteristic "school" of art among the Australians is the so-called x-ray art, which shows not only the outer appearances of an animal or a human being but also what is inside. This is based on the assumption that a full representation must take into account "more than meets the eye," that it is not enough to show what you see but also what you *know* is there. One of the scholars of Australian art, R. M. Berndt (1964:5-6), tells about x-ray art representing a man with lines criss-crossing his forehead. These lines, in the native explanation, signified the man's thoughts.

*ART IN INSTRUCTION.* Art thus gives insights into man's conception of the world, but it also presents interesting problems of its own. If we give children realistic pictures of the animals that the Bushmen see and hunt, pictures of Bushman rock engravings and peckings (these two terms refer to two different techniques of rock art), and also pictures of Bushman drawings of animals, and if we also give them materials similar to those available to the Bushman and let them work on these materials trying to depict the animals, the students will obviously arrive at an appreciation of this particular art. They will quickly learn that if your materials are a rock to carve on and a rock to carve with, and your task is to give a recognizable picture of an animal, you end up doing the engraving in the silhouette, because the side view is the most characteristic one. They will perhaps also find that a simple outline involves much less effort than an elaborate carving of detail. They may also be able to see how essential characteristics of animals are exaggerated. Thus, the



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Bushmen tend to give fast animals long legs, whereas they do not depict the useless wings of an ostrich.

From comparison of various Bushman paintings the students should also find that when you depict fast action your picture is much more stylized than the picture of a standing animal or human, in which case you have time to capture the detail.

There is reason to believe that such discoveries (and many more can be made than are mentioned above) will arise from the students' own experience with materials that are close enough to the original ones. It is not our aim that the children imitate Bushman art, or Eskimo, or Australian art, but what is aimed at is an appreciation of the principles that operate in art.

*FUNCTIONS OF ART.* Perhaps also some hypotheses will be given by the students as to the functions of art. People who are preoccupied with hunting, who therefore spend much of their time observing the behavior of animals, and who have to learn to distinguish different animals from a distance, have an eye for the essential characteristics of animals. The importance of hunting, to which I referred in my short discussion of magic, will also support the magic functions of art. Somewhat distinct from these are the religious functions, which appear clearly in Australian art. There the sacred churingas represent the most important fact of Australian religions, the totems, the ancestral affiliations of each group. Although a churinga may carry symbols which can be interpreted individually (in a similar way that the stars in the American flag represent individual states), the main import of these objects is the representation of the symbol of belonging to a given social group.

Perhaps the most essential thing about primitive art is the diversity of functions, the integrity of life — a principle to which I referred when talking about the functions of myth. Art is created for many reasons, only one of which is the esthetic "drive." But art is connected with esthetic ideas: we may observe the elegance of a line in a "primitive" art work, we may see the great care and skill with which the work is executed. And the cognitive functions of art are indisputable. I already referred to the Australian ideas of a "full" representation. X-ray art is also known from Eskimo groups. Another extremely interesting topic is that of so-called split representation: an animal is shown from both sides at once. Here, too, perception and interpretation is based on what is known (cf. Boas 1927 and Lévi-Strauss 1963).

Art is a valuable area in instruction because it is easy to lead the students to action using that medium. The art of preliterate peoples is an especially rich topic for instruction because of its multiple functions, and in many cases, because of the superb craftsmanship with which it was produced (cf. Boas 1927).

## BUSHMAN EXAMPLES

In the following, I will give some examples of how certain Bushman myths could be used in the classroom. It does not matter whether a myth is the starting point of learning about the life of a Bushman, or whether, for example, the Hunting Game (which has been developed at ESI to simulate problems of hunting cultures) is taken up first. One possible sequence for using different kinds of materials would be to start with a genuine exposition of the Bushman environment. A film showing what kind of landscape, vegetation and climate surround the Bushmen could perhaps be used as an introductory riddle. Given these conditions, what would you do? What kinds of tools would you need for supporting your life in this setting? Given these materials found in this environment, how would you make your tools? Would it be of advantage to organize your group in a certain fashion in order to get the optimum adjustment to the environment?

Answers to such problems can be called hypotheses. But a hypothesis is of little value if it is not tested against actual data. One answer is to be found in the way the Bushmen met the challenge of their environment. Information as to the weapons and hunting techniques used would be in order here.

*THE ORIGIN OF MARRIAGE.* The division of labor in a group is perhaps as important as its technology. Let us see what an actual Bushman myth tells about this.

> In the beginning of things a long, long time ago, when the men and women of the early people lived upon the earth, there were not many men and women in those days. My father told me that the men and women lived apart at that time. The men lived by hunting the animals which abounded everywhere all over the country, while the

women lived by gathering the grass seeds. The men lived in caves in the mountains, and the women in little grass houses near the rivers. The men and women had nothing to do with each other. The men went out shooting one day with their poisoned arrows and killed a springbok, but they were careless and had let their fire go out, so they couldn't cook the springbok. They were not like the women who always kept some fire and did things nicely. They were so hungry that they sent one of their number down to the river to borrow some fire from the women. Now there were five men altogether. When the man got down to the river, and went across, he found a woman amongst the reeds gathering grass seeds, so he asked her for some fire. She said to him, "Come to my village, and I will give you some fire." So he went with her. When they got to her hut she said to him, "You are very hungry, just wait till I pound up these seeds, and I will boil them and give you some." So he sat down and waited. The woman got her grinding stone, and pounded up some of the seeds, then she put them into a pot and made some porridge. After it was cooked she gave some of it to the man, and also had some herself. He asked her what it was, and she replied that it was porridge. "Well," said he, "it's nice food, so I shall just stay with you." So he did not return to his companions with the fire.

After waiting a good while, the men, who were getting still more hungry, sent another of their number down to the women's village to borrow some fire. He also met a woman at the river gathering grass seeds, and he told her he had come to borrow some fire. She asked him to go to her hut and she would give him some fire. So he went with her, but instead of giving him the fire she gave him some porridge, which he thought very nice, and he said he would just stay with her, so he forgot to go back with the fire. There were only three men left now, and they were ravenously hungry by this time, so they sent another man down to the village of the women to borrow fire. When he got to the river, he also found a woman gathering grass seeds in the reeds. He told her he had come to get some fire for the other men, as they wanted to roast a buck, and their own fire had gone out. He said they were very hungry, but he never said anything to the woman about the other men, as he was so much afraid. This woman also said to him, "If you come to my

house, I will give you some fire." He went with her, and she pounded up the grass seeds and made porridge, some of which she gave to the man. He said it was nice food, better than buck meat, and he would stay with her. So he quite forgot to go back to his friends with the fire.

Now there were only two men left, and they were very frightened, and wondered why the other men never came back. They began to throw the bones, but the bones said it was all right, but still they were very frightened. There were many evil spirits in those days, and they thought their companions had been killed. At last, after much hesitation, they agreed that one of them should go and try to get some fire. So they threw the bones as to who should go. The man who was to stay behind made the other man promise that, whatever happened, he would come back. So he started off. When he got down to the river he found a woman gathering grass seeds. He told her he wanted some fire, so she asked him to come to her hut and she would give him some. So he went with her. She also cooked and gave him some of the grass seeds. It was so nice that he stayed with the woman, and forgot all about his promises to go back to his friend. Some days had gone by and the weather was hot, so the springbok was getting quite rotten. The last man was desperately hungry, and could hardly keep from eating the springbok, but still he waited for his friend to come back with the fire. He waited quite a bit, but at last he was so scared that he took up his bow and arrows and fled into a far country, where he was lost altogether. This is how marriage came amongst men and women (Dornan 1925:172-175).

After reading the myth the student should be directed to utilize the information given in this myth. What does the myth tell about the early times? Things did not have the clear-cut order they have at the present time. It is typical of myths of origin that *chaos* prevails before *cosmos* is formed. Confusion precedes order, and life today, for any given people, is ordered. In today's life Bushman women know their duties and so do the men, but it is understood that the one cannot get along without the other, that the sexes function in a complementary fashion. Durkheim expressed this idea, when he was writing about division of labor in society, in the following manner: ". . . men and women isolated

from each other are only different parts of the same concrete universal which they reform when they unite" (1893:56). With their roles defined they together form a full society.

The story can be read also from the point of view of what it tells about technology. How do men hunt? The answer is, "with their poisoned arrows." What do they hunt? Here, as in other Bushman myths, the most important animal is the springbok. Are there different techniques of hunting? There is a hint that for hunting large game a group is formed.

And what are the duties of the women? They "always kept some fire and did things nicely." They gather grass seeds. They pound up the seeds, they make some porridge in a pot. They, in the words of the story, even live in grass houses. In a way that is reminiscent of our notions the women represent domesticity, take care of the home, prepare the food; it is as if they were the guardians of culture, whereas the men deal with nature.

One very little detail in the myth deserves attention. When some of the men had already disappeared and those left behind felt an increasing fear of danger, they resorted to magic. "They began to throw the bones," that is, they resorted to the help of supernaturals. The principle operates here which I referred to in connection with hunting luck: the less you can rely on your own knowledge and skill, the more important is magic. (Malinowski makes a similar point in 1925.)

*THE ORIGIN OF THE SUN.* Another myth, not as clear in its implications regarding social organization, but very emphatic regarding the Bushman perception of the world, is an origin myth which tells how the sun came to function as it does now.

Before the Bushmen were really Bushmen, that is, in the time of "the first race," the Sun was like a man. He shone, but only for his own pleasure: he lit only the immediate neighborhood of his own hut, and the people were cold. A Bushman mother gave detailed instructions to her set of sons to throw the Sun into the sky and to tell the Sun to mind the people's needs: to give them light, to keep the earth warm. The sons carefully followed the instructions, and succeeded in their task. The end result was this:

> The Sun is here, all the earth is bright. The Sun is here, the people walk while the place is light, the earth is light. The people perceive the bushes, they see the other people;

> they see the meat which they are eating; they also see the springbok. They also head the springbok, in summer; they also head the ostrich, while the Sun shines, in summer. They are shooting the springbok in summer when the Sun shines, they see the springbok. They also steal up to the gemsbok; they also steal up to the kudu, while the whole place is bright. They also visit each other, when the Sun shines, the earth is bright, the Sun shines upon the path. They also travel in summer; they are shooting in summer; they hunt in summer; they espy the springbok in summer; they go round to head the springbok; they lie down; they feel that they lie in a little house of bushes; they scratch up the earth in the little house of bushes, they lie down when the springbok come (Bleek 1911:53-55).

The first point about this myth is that — like almost any myth — it is an attempt made "in quest of . . . reality" (Cassirer 1944:75). Moreover, it not only tells of the Bushman reality, it has a cognitive aspect: it describes how the Bushman perceive their environment and their life. The threat of cold, the present order of seasons, the "works" of the sun (marking, indeed, bringing into being the times of the day and the seasons); the intrinsic qualities of the summer (warmth) and its functional qualities (hunting season) — this all tells that there is a definite order to the Bushman world. In short, there are clear statements here as to how these people order, divide, classify their experience.

The world starts with only Bushmen in it; they are "the first race." It might be of interest to throw in the information that there are very many peoples in the world whose word for themselves is "people" (e.g., the Navajo). Is this possible to take up in class, and how? It is, of course, ethnocentric to think that we are the people and what we see is the world, but the Bushmen are not the only ones to think so. Let us consider the history of Western thought, and let us search our own hearts.

There are indications of the environment: "the people perceive the bushes," and they also see what they can hunt. The animals pointed out are the springbok, the ostrich, the gemsbok, the kudu (native drawings of them are available and could be used successfully in class). Thus we see the setting of the Bushman nature and what that nature offers man.

Allusions to technology are again there, e.g., shooting of arrows. Moreover, the importance of hunting is stressed in that as soon as

the people have light and warmth, they hunt. At this point perhaps a native description of the hunting technique would be appropriate (Bleek 1911:285-287 and Willcox 1963:27). The myth is not told to teach people how to hunt; it tells how it is possible that people can hunt. But principles of hunting are there, nevertheless: the care with which one has to proceed to surprise the game; details like throwing up dust into the air, etc. All in all, the myth as such gives a picture of the Bushman means of livelihood.

*THE ORIGIN OF DEATH.* As the Sun is the life-giver, so is the Moon connected with death. Here is one variant of "The Message That Failed":

> The Moon in days of old called the tortoise and by him sent this message to the men of that time: "Oh, men, as I die and am restored to life, so you will be restored to life after you die." Off the tortoise started to deliver the message, repeating it over and over to himself so that he should not forget it. But he was so slow on the way that he forgot the message, in spite of all his care, so he turned back to ask the Moon again. When the Moon heard he had forgotten the message, he was angry and called the hare. He said: "You are a quick runner. Take this message to the men over yonder: 'Oh, men, as I die and am restored to life, so you will be restored to life after you die.'" The hare ran off very fast, but by and by he came to some nice grass and stopped to graze. He forgot the message, and, afraid to turn back, he gave it like this: "Oh, men, you will die, but you will die forever." Just as the hare had finished speaking, the tortoise came up and gave his message, so there was a quarrel between them as to who was right. The hare said the tortoise was a liar. The men were so angry with the hare that one of them lifted a stone and flung it at the hare. The stone struck him in the mouth and split his lip, so every hare has a cleft lip to this day. The men sent to find out what the Moon had really said, but it was too late, as the wrong message had been given, and so all men have died ever since (Dornan 1925:172; the connection between the moon and death is discussed in Eliade 1963:171-174).

I related above some of actual children's reactions to this story,

such as that the Moon must be a god for the Bushmen, since his (for the Bushmen the Moon is masculine) word is obeyed automatically. That the myth is alive in the culture is illustrated by the Bushman taboo on looking at the moon after they have shot game. It is believed, indeed, that the moon has the power of reviving itself each time it "dies," and that this reviving force is contagious. If people whose concern it is to kill game break the taboo, their task will not be successful and the moon will revive the animals.

## ESKIMO EXAMPLES

The examples presented here, as well as those above, can at best give a glimpse of the cultural life of the group investigated. For reasons of brevity, I will here present only one Eskimo myth, a tale of how the first people received their children. The tale was recorded from the immediate neighbors of the Netsilik Eskimos, from the Aivilingmiut.

### *EARTH GIVES THE FIRST MEN THEIR CHILDREN.*

It is said that in very ancient times, in the earliest ages, women were often unable to have children. And when people were out on a journey and settled at a place, one might see them going round about the camping ground, bending down and searching about in the earth. It is said that in that way they sought for children from the earth, the children of earth. And with the children they found on the ground it was like this: a long search was needed to find boys, but one had not to go far to find girls. Not all, however, were equally lucky. Some found only girls, perhaps because they would not take the trouble to go far, being lazy, but those who were not afraid of walking, those who were not lazy, they had sons. As soon as a child was found on the ground, it was picked up at once and put in the *amaut* [the sack in the back of a woman's dress, intended for carrying a child, worn by all adult women whether they are carrying a child or not], and carried off home. The women who came home with children they had

> found, observed precisely the same taboo and the same rules as those who had themselves given birth to a child, and were similarly regarded as unclean. They were given a birth hut of snow, or if it happened in summer, a small tent, and there they stayed for the time prescribed after childbirth, during which the woman must live apart . . . and they were treated exactly as if they had borne children of their own flesh and blood. Some found children very easily, others found none, however much they sought about. Thus the earth gave the first people their children, and in that way they grew to be many (Rasmussen 1929:254).

Apart from the obvious fact that "in the earliest ages" things were radically different from conditions of today (again the *chaos* versus *cosmos* distinction), it is possible to observe how this myth reflects the value system of the Eskimos. As Rasmussen — himself a half Eskimo — observed, the emphasis is always on boys, as future hunters (1929:173). Those who are fortunate, "find" sons, and fortune is reached by industry, by "long search."

Such values appear in this narrative. It can also be read as a direct account of practices during and after childbirth: the mother is kept in isolation for a certain time period; for this isolation, she is given a snow hut in the winter, a tent in the summer. As far as the statement about her being "regarded as unclean" is concerned, the translation should perhaps be checked. For it is a common phenomenon in religions that both "unclean" and "sacred" are denoted with one word, meaning something like extraordinary (as opposed to ordinary), dangerous, a thing to be avoided, and the reason of avoiding sacred persons and objects is the fact that they are charged with contagious power, *mana* (cf. Durkheim 1911:62 which defines sacred as "things set apart and forbidden"). This story tells how Eskimo women (and the newborn babies) have *mana* in the period after childbirth and how they therefore are tabooed, cut off from any contact with the other members of the group.

The taboo on childbirth means in actual life that an Eskimo woman will have nobody assisting her in the birth hut. At the same time, however, the group feels solidarity and is vitally interested in its new member. This conflict is resolved in the manner that a shaman (a person who can perform cures with the aid of his helping spirits) chants magic formulas for the woman. In one such formula, the words run: "I stretch my hands out to help

you/Here at this spot we have become ill. . . ." Again, *we* — that is, the solidarity of the group is such that when one of the members suffer, all suffer. And, predictably, the formula goes on to express the wish that the child will be a boy (Rasmussen 1931:285-288).

*THE ROLE OF A POET AND THE ROLE OF A MAN.*

I will take one last example, this time of an individual song. A prominent member of the Netsilik society had composed the song when he was depressed after a long illness. It should be noted that in the Netsilik life the poet is by no means a bystander: Rasmussen reports that Orpingalik was both a shaman held in high esteem and a hunter respected as a great man among his people. He was a strong and deadly archer, and the quickest kayakman in the group.

From Rasmussen's descriptions one can gather that the Netsilik respected an intelligent man above others. The picture Rasmussen gives of Orpingalik describes his sensitivity and his intelligence. The importance of poetry is shown in Orpingalik's attitude towards Rasmussen after he had recited his poems: the fact that Rasmussen now shared his poetry made the two men almost brothers. "The spirits of life would regard us as one, as it were, and treat us the same if only we closely observe all the taboo that life required." And the importance of the poems to their composer is shown by Orpingalik's calling his most intimate poem his *breath*. As he himself put it, "all my being is song, and I sing as I draw breath." The children could, perhaps, gain insight into the integrity of the Netsilik culture by stopping to think how central a position a poet occupies in society, and how central a position poetry occupies in the poet's life.

*My Breath*

Unaya, unaya,
A song I sing, loudly I sing:
Since autumn like my own child I have been helpless
Unaya, unaya.

Sometimes I would that my house and its mistress were gone.
She is with one who is not worth being with,
With him, who should be her refuge and provider.

I would she were gone
Now that I can no longer get up!
Unaya, unaya.

Do you know yourself?
Beasts of the hunt, is there not one I can recall?
Unaya, unaya.

I faintly remember the white one,
Its back-body raised high.
And here it thought it was the only male
And came towards me at full speed.
Unaya, unaya.

Again and again it threw me down,
But without lying over me it quickly went from me again.
And here of meeting other males
It had not thought;
And by an ice-floe's edge
It lay down calmly.
Unaya, unaya.

Never do I forget the blubber animal.
On the firm ice I had already flensed it,
When my neighbours, those I shared land with here,
Had just awakened:
It was as if I had merely gone out to its breathing hole and there —
Unaya, unaya.

And there I came across it,
And just as I stood over it, at the breathing hole, it heard me,
Without first scratching at the ice,
The firm ice's under edge it had hooked on to
Truly, it was a cunning beast,
And just as I was feeling sorry because I had not caught it —
Unaya, unaya.

I caught it fast with my harpoon head,
Before it had even drawn breath!
My house and its mistress here,
For whose lamp I brought no blubber, and now spring has come

And dawn gives place to dawn: when shall I be well?
Unaya, unaya.

My house and its mistress — from her neighbours
She will always have to get skins for her clothing,
Get meat to eat,
Without my providing for her — Oh! When shall I be well?
Unaya, unaya.

I recall again, once
When over the current crack's widest part
That caribou cow with calf —
That time I pursued it with all my strength,
I remember,
Without believing I should catch it
I chased it hard.
Oh! I remember it —
Other kayaks
Thought it was they who would get there first,
And undoubtedly said so to one another,
But I chased it with all my strength.
And now I recall
How it was through me that there was nothing for the others at all

(Rasmussen 1931:324-327).

There are two variants of this poem, one of them a literal translation of Orpingalik's original text (given above), the other one Rasmussen's free rendering of the same text. A comparison of these two variants might be done by the students in order to find out how, in Rasmussen's opinion, Netsilik thought and verbal expressions differ from the English speaker's way of thinking. Personally, I consider the literal translation both more poetic and more revealing (cf. also Hymes 1965).

What makes this poem a lyric is the recurring statement of a condition that the singer cannot change, his helplessness. But this poem includes also three narratives, each describing a successful hunt, and used here only to emphasize the helplessness of the present time. Orpingalik had been a great hunter, but when he was lying sick in his tent, at the time when he composed this poem, his having been successful only intensified his present helplessness.

The imagery of this poem can be analyzed, as all Netsilik texts can be, as reflections of the salient traits of Netsilik culture. Who is helpless? The woman, who depends on her husband for her support, who needs a "refuge and provider," who needs blubber for her lamp, meat for food, skins for clothes. But even more helpless than the woman is a child, and when Orpingalik wants to emphasize his own helplessness, he uses the image: "like my own child I have been helpless."

The Arctic summer's constant light is referred to in Orpingalik's references to spring: "and now spring has come and dawn gives place to dawn." I do not know the original text, but it is my guess that perhaps this is a description of the Arctic summer nights, when you cannot tell a sunset from a sunrise.

Again the hunting methods can be analyzed from the three descriptions of hunts. The first one, the hunt of a polar bear, is a miniature drama: "the white one" rushes towards the hunter, throws him down, and is finally silenced by him. The seal hunt is entirely different from the bear hunt: the care in not being heard by the seal, the quick attack to catch it "before it had even drawn breath," the emphasis on the cunning of the seal, all these traits tell the same message as does the film the students will see. And the caribou hunt is a communal one. In the other descriptions, Orpingalik refers to other people only as absent, but here his kayak is one in a group of kayaks.

I regard this song as a rich document, because of its emphasis on the importance of a hunter for his family, its realistic descriptions of hunting, and because of the vivid picture it gives of a highly talented individual.

## CONCLUSION

The examples above should suffice to show the richness of myth and art materials and their possibilities in instruction. One of the aims of such instruction would be to make the students aware that myths, and works of art, are not to be considered "queer" or "exotic," but that they are worth the while to study in context.

A few final remarks: Children of our society tend to think that education equals going to school; they are likely at first to come up with the opinion that "primitive" peoples are "superstitious" because they "do not have an education." We hope to be able to

make it clear how systematically and how carefully every society brings up its offspring, that is, gives them an education.

Let me give an example. The Navajo of the Southwest United States have traditionally had their storytelling season only in the winter. In our time, Navajo children live away from home during the winter, because they are in boarding schools. Thus, a couple of years ago, the Navajo Tribal Council made a resolution to institute summer schools for the children; for although they were given a white man's education, they were missing the traditional Navajo education, or at least an important part of it.

As to the notion of superstition, let me point out that it is indeed a very unfair term: we label *other* people's beliefs superstitions, only because *we* do not happen to believe in them. Although it may take some rather careful study, our students (and their teachers) should realize that it is not that "primitives are superstitious because they do not have an education," but that societies other than ours have different systems of beliefs, different views of the world than we have, and that this is so because their life experience, their tradition, and their education are different from ours.

Thus the overall aim of the myth unit is to lead to an understanding of other cultures, an understanding which will guide the students to respect them. Such a respect will not diminish the respect for their own cultural heritage, for the sum of respect is not a constant. Seeing how a human group copes with its conditions should add to an understanding of the human condition in general, Western man included.

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